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GWENDOLINE'S HARVEST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'LOST SIR MASSINGBERD,' AND 'A PERFECT TREASURE.'

THE SOWING.

CHAPTER I.—ON THE RIVER TERRACE.

On the left bank of a certain river in West Cornwall, stood, a quarter of a century ago, an ancient residence, entitled for the most part by admiring tourists Belvidere Court, but more properly designated Bedivere. It was very old, and, for all that is known to the contrary, may have existed in some shape or other in King Arthur's day, and been the country-seat of Sir Bedivere himself, 'the last of all his knights'; though his stronghold it could scarcely have been, by reason of its position. A wide bend of the river, which was navigable for small boats to the sea, afforded on its southern shore the space upon which the edifice was built; and it was commanded of course by the opposite bank, as well as by that which—now a wall of autumn foliage—towered steeply up behind it. The mansion, which was built of stone, four-square, and with a courtyard within, although an imposing and stately edifice, exhibited traces not only of decay, but of neglect. Time, that at last must needs eat into the heart of stone itself, can be bought off for a space like any other barbarian; but small attempt had been here made to come to terms with him. The grass in the courtyard was growing up among the cracked stones; the vast oak staircases needed the carpenter as well as the polisher; the wood-work of the huge windows was rotten and worm-eaten, and even the panes in some of the disused rooms were missing—that is, having been broken, they had been removed altogether, to avoid the unsightliness they would otherwise have afforded.

From the river, however, Bedivere Court looked every inch a palace, and you would never have guessed that it was the home of poverty. The furniture of the reception-rooms was massive and striking, if its splendour was somewhat faded; and

the thick pile of its immense carpets had in places grown thin and bare. The three drawing-rooms, *en suite*, had gilt and ormolu enough to furnish forth an acre of first floor in Mayfair or Belgravia; but in the daylight they shewed dull and lustreless, and the wax candles which would have been necessary to light them up, would have consumed a week's income of their present proprietor. Sir Guy Treherne had been accustomed all his life to burn his candles at both ends, and the same fashion had held with his ancestors before him. In Sir Guy's own sitting-room—a very snug one, and in which no article of modern luxury was wanting—hung a picture of his great-grandfather, Sir Ralph, illustrative enough of this family peculiarity. It represented a man of middle age, attired in old velvet and tarnished lace, playing at cards by himself, with a mug of ale before him. The legend ran that this noble gentleman had gambled so freely, and with such continuous ill-luck, that he could at last find no man so poor as to contend with him, and was driven to play Put, the right hand against the left, for pots of beer. The game had this advantage, that whichever won, Sir Ralph always emptied the mug; but it was a sad falling-off from the days when he could stake mine and moor upon one turn of a card or one throw of the dice; and eventually, tired of this solitary sport, he had been compelled to marry an heiress.

On the floor above, the best furnished sleeping-room—and, indeed, it had nothing to be desired which the London upholsterer could supply—was again Sir Guy's; and if you had only looked at those two chambers, you would have said that the interior of Bedivere Court was in all respects in keeping with the stately character of its external appearance—as seen, that is, from the point of

view we have already indicated. The rare 'excursion'-parties—which, in those pre-railway days, came in pleasure-boats up the river—would tarry opposite the 'Court,' and express their innocent wishes that they were only half as rich as the possessor of that imposing structure; but if their desire could have been gratified, it would probably have proved even more disappointing than fulfilled desires usually are. It was only strangers from a distance who could have been under such a misapprehension at all. Not a boatman at St Medards-on-Sea, which was the nearest town; not a cottager on the wide moorland that stretched to southward, almost to the Land's End itself; not an underground worker in those western mines, that had long passed from the lavish hands of the Trehermes, but knew that Sir Guy was almost as poor as themselves, notwithstanding he still lived at Bedivere Court, and that his daughter, Miss Gwendoline, was the acknowledged beauty of the county. And not only, it might have been added, of the county, but even of the London season. That very summer, Gwendoline Treherne had made a *succès* which had filled many a Belgravian matron with jealous bitterness. She had come, had been seen, and conquered at seventeen, the previous year; and they had hoped she would have gained her end, and left the field free for others perhaps not less favoured by nature than herself, although they might have lacked that imperial grace of which they did not deny her the possession. Fashion, more honest (because more audacious) than mere Gentility, allows some merits even in a rival, and it was confessed on all hands that a more magnificent creature had never courted at St James's than Gwendoline Treherne. Those were not the days of chignons, and the genuineness of those masses of bright brown hair, that fell on either side of her broad white brow, and would have rippled to her heels but for the pearls that held them, was never called in question. Her complexion, although exquisitely fair, was almost colourless; and it was urged that those splendid eyes gazed, from under their long black lashes, with too little interest upon the whirl and glitter of the world, for one so new to it; that those fine features, faultless as they were in form, somewhat lacked expression. None could doubt that she had wit, but that again, it was said, was of too mature a sort: too mocking and too worldly even for the idle jesting throng amid whom her lot was cast. She sang, she played, and in none of those accomplishments which Fashion has imposed on those who aspire to be her favourites, acquitted herself otherwise than well; but in these she failed to captivate, because it was plain to all that she herself took no pleasure in them. It was also hinted, by persons of judgment of her own sex, that in a few years Gwendoline Treherne would grow 'horribly coarse'—contract too much of what is scientifically termed adipose deposit; and, indeed, in this Hebe of eighteen, there was something—though it was as much owing to her mature manner as to her rounded charms—that reminded

one also of Juno. The fact was, her form was one of those which Nature only now and then permits herself to build, lest it should discredit the rest of her human handiwork. Graceful in youth—graceful in womanhood—graceful, or possessing something closely akin to grace, in age itself; strong, yet supple; delicate, yet enduring; and which, having suffered, shews no trace of Sorrow's ploughshare even until the end. Even at eighteen, Gwendoline had had experiences which would have marred the beauty of some girls for life, but there is not a line on that white brow to tell of them, nor one reflex of regret even in the most secret depths of those grand eyes.

Mark her now as she stands alone in the late but sultry autumn evening, with one hand on the balustrade of the terrace, and her queenly head turned slightly to one side, to catch an expected sound—the beat of oars upon the river. So motionless, she might have been a statue, save for the quick rise and fall of the fair bosom, which seems to resent the restraint even of its scant muslin prison. She is attired, though the materials of her dress are simple enough, in the height (or rather lowness) of the prevailing fashion; her noble head has no covering save that which bountiful Nature has bestowed upon it, and her round white arms are bare. If she had had a mother, or indeed any prudent person whatever to look after her, she would surely at that late hour have worn at least a shawl; but she is a stranger, and has ever been so, to the veriest commonplaces of affection and domestic care; nor is there one of that scanty household, including simple Fanny, her own maid, who dares interfere even in her own behalf with Miss Gwendoline's caprices.

The expected oar-stroke is heard at last, dull in the distance, and silver-sharp as it draws nigh, and a light skiff shoots up to the terrace stairs. At the first sound, she withdraws into the square stone chamber—which, half arbour, half greenhouse, stands at the extremity of the river-frontage—and there awaits the oarsman; it is not the first time that he has found her there, for it is her accepted lover, Piers Mostyn.

'You are late to-night, dear Piers,' says she, in a tone that certainly lacks no tenderness of expression; 'and yet I told you papa would be away by six o'clock'—

'And not return until to-morrow,' added he, embracing her; 'that will give us the whole morning together, Gwendoline.'

That this handsome young fellow, with the short curly hair and blonde moustache, that contrast so strongly with cheeks bronzed by the southern sun, was in love with her, was evident enough, and yet he called her by no pet name, such as love delights in. She was Gwendoline to him, as to her father and to all the world.

'No, Piers; you will not see me to-morrow, nor at all again for many a long day,' returned she calmly; 'so you must make the most of me while you can.'

He kissed her fondly, as he well might do on such an invitation, and running his fingers through her ample tresses, sighed, somewhat wearily: 'What new enigma is this, my darling? You have always something in that scheming brain of yours to trouble me with. I sometimes wish that you were a little more like other girls.'

'Like your cousin Maude may be, for instance?' answered she quickly, and over her pale face there came a sudden glow of scarlet.

'Now, don't be foolish, dear. How can you be so jealous of a shadow?—for she is but a shadow compared with you, my empress! I only meant that when I would have you all love and tenderness, you so often chill me with the recollection of our penniless condition, and the obstacles that intervene between us and happiness.'

'It is better so, Piers: we must look difficulties in the face if we would overcome them.'

'Well, I look at them, but they get no smaller for that,' answered the young man, with a touch of petulance. 'It is only when I look at you that I forget them.'

'My darling Piers!'

To one who saw her, heard her now, it would have seemed ridiculous enough that any one should have ever said that Gwendoline's voice was wanting in flexibility, her features in expression, her eyes in passionate tenderness. For a brief space she seemed as ready as her lover himself to forget, in their mutual caresses, the gulf so difficult to be bridged by marriage between the penniless daughter of Sir Guy and the worse than penniless Piers Mostyn, the younger brother of a childless but still youthful lord, and whose slender patrimony was already exceeded by his debts. She was, however, the first to recall this stubborn fact to her remembrance—and to his.

'Dear Piers,' said she, 'if you really love me as you profess to do, you must listen seriously to what I have to say, and abide by it. I have had a long talk with papa to-day. He has placed my future position before me quite unreservedly.'

'I can easily believe it, Gwendoline,' returned the other with a bitter smile; 'Sir Guy can be a very plain speaker when he chooses. I have had experience of that myself.'

'Nevertheless, since he has only stated what is the fact, it is worth our best attention, Piers;' and she touched his somewhat effeminate cheek with her white hand, and pushed him gently from her. 'You must learn to live away from me, my own.'

'Let me have these to comfort me,' said he, snatching her fingers, and covering them with kisses; 'then, when you come to speak of parting, it will seem less bitter.'

CHAPTER II.—PLAIN SPEAKING.

'You have said papa can speak plainly, Piers, and you are right; moreover, he never loses his temper. He called me into his room to-day, and referred to my having met you here the other evening—who could have told him, I cannot guess, but he has found it out—as coolly as though you had been your brother, Lord Luttrell.'

'Who, had he been a bachelor, would scarcely have suited Sir Guy better,' observed Piers parenthetically. 'The estate is dipped deeper than I had thought, and if he were to die childless to-morrow, I should still be but a poor man.'

'Then, even that chance may be put out of the question,' observed Gwendoline significantly; 'and there is all the more reason for your laying to heart what I have now to say. You called me just now your empress: Piers, I am obliged to you for the compliment, but, as you don't happen to be King Cophetua, I am not likely, so far as you are concerned, to be other than I am—a beggar-maid.' Yes, Piers; not merely a girl with an inadequate portion, you must understand, but an absolutely penniless one. Even that tumble-down old house yonder is only my home so long as papa lives, nor has he one single shilling to leave behind him.'

'Nay, Gwendoline; I know that you will be poor enough, but your father has surely exaggerated the case; it is impossible.'

'Nothing is impossible, Piers,' interrupted she gravely, 'when a man has sunk the remnant of his fortune in a life-annuity.'

'What! with a daughter absolutely dependent upon him? Do you mean to tell me that Sir Guy—'

'Nay, do not let us discuss the selfishness of man, Piers, because it is an extensive subject, and the night is late,' observed Gwendoline with cynical calm. 'Let us rather take matters as they are, and make the best of them. Papa's notion is—if his morality has any interest for you—that he has invested a considerable sum in my education, in my wardrobe, and in my *début* in London last year, and that I must live upon what profit I can get out of them, and look for nothing more from him. He is so good as to say that I have very considerable attractions of my own, which, in combination with what he has done for me, ought, it seems, to make my future position quite secure. He informed me that men will bid higher for beauty than for aught else in the world; and that, in my case, it would be a great imprudence not to close at once with the highest bidder.'

'And what did you say, Gwendoline?' inquired her lover, gazing on her with passion, yet in wonderment—wrapped in a sort of charmed awe.

'He did not give me time to speak, Piers; but turning to the picture of our ancestor, Sir Ralph, he said: "The Trehernes have never been so poor as now save once, my dear, which was in this gentleman's time; who, as you see, had to take to beer, and backing his right hand against his left at cards; yet he contrived to marry an heiress, and thereby kept Bedivere Court in the family for a hundred and fifty years after him. Now, what that middle-aged profligate, in tattered clothes yonder, could manage to effect, lies easily enough, I fancy, within the reach of my daughter, Gwendoline." Nor, indeed, could I deny that papa spoke truth in that, Piers.'

Self-conscious of the power of the beauty of which she spoke, she drew herself up to her full height, and her dark eyes flashed around her as though with the triumph they foresaw.

'But did you not tell him that you had promised yourself to me?' inquired her lover, not without some touch of dignity.

'I did not—because I saw he knew it already, Piers. Papa knows everything that can in any way affect himself, be sure of that. He knows what is good for us, since it also happens to be what is good for him. He did not use a single menace, nor even bid me never see you again. It is likely enough he understood you would be here

to-night. He simply placed my position and yours before me, on the social map, just like a lesson in geography. "If you choose to marry this pleasant young sprig of nobility," said he, "you can of course do so. I will not even refuse my blessing, but I doubt whether you can live on that, or even pay his debts with it."

"Gad, he is right there!" observed the Honourable Piers Mostyn ruefully.

"Of course he is right, Piers, or I would not have troubled you with these notes of his conversation. I love you, my darling; ah! *how* I love you, but as for our marriage!"

"Gwendoline, dearest Gwendoline," whispered the young man passionately, and passing his arm around her waist, "let the world take its own way without us; for your sake I can be content to live on a crust! Fly with me—to-night—to-morrow! You shall stay with my old tutor and his wife until I can get the license. Nobody shall stop us; nothing shall turn me from you; you have only to say, "I will."

For an instant—for a single instant—Gwendoline was silent: charmed with the glowing picture thus presented to her, her white cheek grew whiter, sicklied o'er by the pale hue of passion; she closed her eyes, as though to hide from herself that comely appealing face she so often saw, even in her dreams, but never so lover-like and fond as now; but the next moment she was herself again. "No, Piers. We can neither of us afford this folly; or, at least," added she, staying the vehement protestation upon the threshold of his lips with no trembling finger, "I for my part cannot afford it. For argument's sake—or rather to avoid argument—let it be granted that you could undergo the sacrifice—that you, accustomed to luxury from your cradle, to extravagance and self-indulgence from your boyhood, could, for my sake, live, as you say, upon a crust; but for me, I am less simple in my tastes:

Love in a hut with water and a crust,
Is, Lord forgive us! cinders, ashes, dust.

Even a poet has had the good sense to see that, Piers; and I am not a poet, nor would be one even if I could. I too have been brought up, if not in luxury, still without lack of comforts, refinements, and, of late years, I have tasted of the golden water of life, the elixir of rank and wealth—a Circe cup, as some call it—but which is to me, I confess, most sweet and delectable; nay, what is more, Piers, wealth, or what wealth can buy, has become indispensable to my happiness. Look at me—you who called me empress but a while ago, and ask yourself the question—could this girl live a life of poverty? No, Piers; not even for your sake. If that love for you, which I have acknowledged with no niggard tongue, is to be lasting, it must be put to no such test. In your heart of hearts you will soon confess that I have spoken for both of us—you will thank me for not having permitted you to indulge a generous but reckless impulse; but I am content to bear the present blame myself; to let the imputation of worldliness and selfish caution rest upon my own shoulders. You may call me calculating, but you can scarcely call me cold, my darling.

He had unclasped his arm from around her waist, and over his finely chiselled features there had stolen, while she spoke, the same look of curiosity, almost of suspicion, that was already

seen there once before—a look that seemed to say: "This girl is not like other girls; I cannot fathom her; but her last loving words evoked his smile again—and he had a very winning smile.

"No, Gwendoline; you are not cold," said he fondly; "it would be kinder to me if you were, since your view of our future is so hopeless!"

"Do not despise me for my loving candour," exclaimed the young girl suddenly: "to tell you how I love you is the only luxury which is at present within my power, and now I have done with even that. You must leave St Medards to-morrow, Piers. You must go home, or, at least, far from this place."

"Why so, my darling? Matters can be no worse than they are now. Your father understands our mutual position, and has confidence—not ill-founded, as it seems—in his daughter's prudence. I have been only here four days, and seen you but thrice."

"Nevertheless, Piers, you must do as I say, if you really wish to be one day able to call me yours."

"But how can my absence possibly promote that end, Gwendoline?"

"Do not ask me, darling—do not press me, I conjure you. Strive to believe, rather, that the sight of you, the knowledge of your nearness to me, would be more than I have strength to bear. Or, if not so, credit me, Piers, when I tell you that your absence *will* promote that end, will bring us—slowly but surely—more near to one another; will make me—it must, it shall, your wife at last!"

"And in the meantime, Gwendoline, is it possible I read you aright for once? Some other man is to be your husband."

"Yes, Piers."

A long silence fell between them: nothing was heard but the swift flow of the river, and the murmur of the fir-tree tops upon the crest of the opposite bank. Upon these, as they gently swayed in the moonlit air, they both fixed their eyes, not looking upon one another.

"And is this to be a one-sided arrangement?" inquired the young man presently, with a bitter laugh; "or am I, too, to be free to wed?"

"Free do you call it!" exclaimed Gwendoline haughtily. "Is it you, then, who have to make the sacrifice? Papa, indeed, must have spoken truth when he said men were all alike—harsh, selfish!"

"Dear Gwendoline, I ask pardon. It is you, of course, who will have to suffer. I do see that. But the proposition so took me by surprise, I scarce knew what I said."

"Nay, you were right to speak your thought, Piers. It is necessary that we should thoroughly understand one another. If you promise to remain single, I, on the other hand, will not impose unreasonable terms upon you. You have been told, like me, that your best chance in life—your only prospect, indeed, it is like enough—is to make a wealthy marriage. Well, so be it. I have a definite plan, a plan that will succeed, I feel; but if it fail—and it *may* fail—I will release you at once from your engagement. Or, if your debts should so accumulate—although I trust to help you *there*, Piers—as to necessitate— But no; I cannot bear to think of that, my darling; you will wait for me. You will be patient, for the sake of your poor wretched Gwendoline. For I *shall* be wretched—ah, as you men can never guess, until the time

comes—until we shall be both repaid for all.—You are not hating me, darling, are you?—not despising me for casting away all hope of happiness for years, for your dear sake!

'Nay, Gwendoline; I am all admiration: if your scheme seemed strange at first, it is, I perceive, the only one that is left to us. And yet I am lost in wonder that you should have hit upon it. I have always found women, even the wise ones, so impracticable and full of sentiment. Now, you have no nonsense about you of that sort.'

'He does despise me,' thought Gwendoline, with a shudder. 'He would have loved me better had I been a fool, like other girls.' But she smiled upon him fondly, as she answered: 'I am acting for the best, my darling, and must fit myself for the part I have to play as well as I can. It is only the knowledge of your love that will support me through it. I possess it—do I not, Piers?—Yes, you say so, and I believe you; but you can never love me as I love you.'

Again he pressed her to his breast with passionate warmth, and she felt that he was here once more: the risk she had run of losing him altogether had been greater than she had expected, but it was over now. The dangerous subject had been entered upon; she had skated over the thin ice, and was safe; but it was better not to venture near that perilous spot again.

'You must leave me now, darling,' said she, 'or that little fool of a waiting-maid of mine will be coming out to look for me. I will keep you well advised of all that happens, but we must not meet again at present. Remember, I am yours, and yours only, for ever! How I long for that dear day when you shall have the right to call me so!—Farewell—nay, not another kiss, Piers—my own dear love, farewell!'

He leaped lightly into the skiff, and keeping it under the shadow of the terrace, and out of sight of the house, rowed rapidly away. Gwendoline watched him to the corner of the river-bend with hungry eyes, then sank down upon the arbour-seat in a paroxysm of tears and sobs.

'What a life is now before me,' gasped she, 'and without his smile to cheer it! My Piers, my Piers, how can I ever bear it! And was he to be "free to wed," he asked—no; a thousand times no. I would rather see him dead before my eyes! He was half-frightened at my plan, I know. When papa said he was glad to see that there was "no nonsense about me," it was different; I did not mind his words; but Piers thought ill of me for that, I know. What do they mean, these men, who bring us up to splendour and pleasure, who flatter us till there is no more simplicity of nature in us than in themselves, and then despise us for being what they have made us!'

Presently growing calmer, she put aside the tresses that had fallen over her drooping face, and gazed before her with eyes no longer tearful. 'How glad I am,' mused she, 'he did not press me for the details of my scheme. He spared me there, indeed, as did my father too. How I flushed up, I know, when papa said this morning: "There is nobody to marry you hereabouts, Gwendoline, who does not know a deal too much of the position of my affairs." But yet he had no suspicion of my plan. Even he has not the brains that I have; and much less Piers. And yet, ah, how I love dear Piers!' With a softened look on her proud

face, and with her hands folded over her bosom, as though nourishing the fond thoughts that nestled there, Gwendoline moved slowly towards the house.

SEA-DRIFT.

DEEP-SEA currents are the pulses of the ocean. Vibrating with ceaseless motion, they keep it in strong healthy activity, preserve its waters from corruption, and its myriad life from annihilation, and soften the extremes of climate along its shores. The warm and over-salted water of the tropics is mingled with that which is fresher from river-mouths, and colder from chill, unshaded regions both north and south. Nothing disturbs the grand equilibrium of nature. There is an ebb and flow, constant as the tides, of this vast assemblage of watery forces, too gentle to uproot the most fragile coral fan, too strong for the mightiest storm to turn aside. This is a kingdom that knows no disloyalty. Its laws, at least those few that are as yet discovered, have remained unchanged for thousands, perhaps millions of years, and are still in operation, ruling and guiding the same species of living creatures that existed from the earliest ages. One of these fixed laws has been demonstrated by the great American geographer of the sea. It is, that wherever a current, whether of warm or cold water, runs, another, generally of opposite temperature and density, returns to supply its place. Thus the sea is never at rest. I do not here intend to present a general view of the 'rivers of the ocean,' but of those substances borne along by their waters, and deposited often at great distances from their native shores. Trivial in themselves, they act a part of some importance in the complicated physical system of the world.

The inhabitants of the sea are fiercer than those of the land, all, or nearly all, being carnivorous, and preying upon each other. Various regions or zones are inhabited by certain fishes and other animals peculiar to them, and found in no other parts. Sometimes they travel to find food, but those greater travellers, the currents, bring them large supplies too. The Gulf Stream carries immense numbers of the jelly-like medusæ northward, to be eagerly devoured by the Greenland whale, whose huge body is chiefly sustained by such apparently trifling food. It is well known that the narrowness of its throat prevents it from swallowing anything larger than shrimps and small crabs. Medusæ abound in the polar seas, sometimes to such an extent as to calm ruffled water, but the amount drifted from the tropics is not too much to make up for its constant destruction by this animal. The great nursery of marine life is in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. There the warm placid waters are seen tinged for miles with crimson, yellow, or white, by millions of infusoria, whose curious forms are only revealed by the microscope. There whole fleets of the 'Portuguese man-of-war' and 'Sallee-man,' as sailors call the nautilus and velella, are setting out with the gentle drift-currents on a long voyage that has no end for them but death, and a sinking into unfathomable depths of still dark water below, where their delicate shells add to the crust of dead organisms ever forming freshly upon the sea-floor.

The general drift of the sea is distinct from the motion of currents, though it is not easy to say

why they differ, as both appear to be affected by the same causes: derangement of equilibrium by a variance of temperature, saltiness, level, &c. From three to five tenths of a mile an hour is the usual speed of drift, but its influence is felt more or less over the whole breadth of an ocean; while the Gulf Stream, for instance, flows at the rate of four knots an hour in the Florida Pass, and its extent, and that of ordinary currents, are limited to a certain area. The direction of the main drift is generally to and from the poles, with the equator as an actual boundary-line between, but it is turned aside by the earth's rotation and the trend of the coast.

Every current of importance is known on approaching it by a rippling motion along its edge, and the quantity of sea-weed floating with it. When a large space to the right of a current is covered with floating but stationary masses of weed, it is called a sargasso. It appears to be a law, that whatever loose drift-matter may be carried by a current should be chiefly cast off to the right; that is, when the current is tolerably strong, and meets with no opposition from conflicting streams. This is especially the case when currents flow in a circle, as in the North Pacific and Atlantic. Maury counts five true sargassos, the principal one lying in the pool to the right of that majestic king of ocean-rivers, the Gulf Stream, to whom we in the British Islands owe the mildness of our climate. Over this, called in distinction the Sargasso Sea, weed is not evenly spread, but occurs in thick patches. Its appearance is well known. Lying in broad masses like meadows of parched grass, or in long, parallel, yellow strings of a uniform species, the sargassum rises out of the water, always pointing to the wind without leaving its place. There it has remained since the days of the first navigators westward, to whose wondering eyes it looked solid as land. Thousands of marine animals, crabs, small fish, star-fish, sea-urchins, and infusoria make it their home, finding a quiet refuge under its branching vegetation from the attacks of their hungry brethren. Humboldt thinks the sargassum weed has been torn by currents from its native rocks, and that though it adheres firmly for some time, after fructification it separates easily; while Meyen asserts, after a close examination, that it possesses only the mere semblance of a root, and never could have been attached to any solid foundation, but must grow, cast its seed, and perish floating. So that it is perhaps as much the offspring of the waves as the living creatures themselves. If it does grow upon the rocky bottom, where is its birthplace? Far from these latitudes, undoubtedly, for the bed of the North Atlantic being pretty well mapped out now, we know that the 'grassy sea' is nowhere less than two thousand fathoms deep, and around its edges the water only shoals to seventeen hundred. Of course, no one needs to be told that at such a depth, it is scarcely possible that coloured organisms, or even life at all, should exist, and still more improbable is it that there should be the least under-current or movement of the water. Nevertheless, our knowledge is yet too slight to make any positive assertion. The universally received theory of Edward Forbes, that all life and colour ceased beyond three hundred fathoms, has been demolished by recent soundings, and it is difficult to assign to them a farther limit.

The large patch of weed east of Cape Horn is not a true sargasso, but is probably drifted from Tierra del Fuego, where the giant algae grows in great quantities. Its ribbon-like ends undulate on the surface of the water, when their roots are attached to rocks from five hundred to one thousand feet below. Parts of the Strait of Magellan are so much encumbered by it, that vessels get through with difficulty. Almost without exception, the different kinds of kelp and wrack are of a sombre tint, generally olive-coloured, or of a brownish green. The delicate green and red varieties are small, and grow in shallow water close inshore. Small floating islands of 'long kelp' are frequently met with in the southern seas, especially near Cape Horn, warning the sailor to steel himself for battle with the mad, leaping waves of the stormy cape. Torn roughly from its sheltering bays, the sea-weed is hurried away by eddying currents, or left to drift slowly in gray, shivering heaps over the rainy seas. A similar kind grows around the Kurile and Aleutian Islands, and along the north-west coast of America. Its stem is often three hundred feet long, bearing leaves of thirty or forty feet. Some kinds are annual, and grow to the length of forty feet in a single summer.

Sea-weed is not without its uses. The immense quantities of wrack thrown upon the coasts of Scotland, Ireland, and Iceland are used by the poor for fuel and cattle-food, and the more delicate kinds are even eaten by themselves. Formerly, thousands of tons were used annually in the manufacture of alkali. The edible birds' nests found along the shores of the Java and Chinese seas, are made by a swallow which feeds upon a species of floating sea-weed. From this it extracts the glutinous substance forming the nest. This gelatine can be made artificially, if one may so call it, by boiling down the weed; and in some parts of the Indies it is really used in cookery.

Seeds, plants, and even large trees are often drifted across the seas to foreign shores, where they sometimes take root, if the soil and climate be favourable. Growing in the hot, rank moisture of a primeval forest, or among the reeds bordering a grassy upland, this living vegetation is swept away with its whole banks by the furious inundations of tropical rivers. It forms a sand-bank at the river-mouth, which in course of time silts up into a delta, generally an immense, thickly-wooded swamp of rich alluvial soil, tigers and alligators infesting its gloomy depths. But a great part of this *débris* is driven out to sea. Mr Bates says that in the flood-season the Amazons bears along 'a continuous line of uprooted trees and islets of floating plants;' and in the open sea, four hundred miles from its mouth, he saw 'patches of floating grass, mingled with tree-trunks and withered foliage,' among them fruits of a tree found only on the banks of the Great River, the Ubussie palm. The floods of the Orinoco, the Congo, the Ganges, the Plate, and the Mississippi float out to sea similar natural rafts. Among the Philippine and Molucca Islands they are met with, coming probably from the large Chinese rivers. Those of the Orinoco are covered with water-plants in flower; and so solid are they, that many a canoe is wrecked against them on dark nights as they come down with the swirling flood. The Mississippi tears away whole acres covered with

wood; and one hundred miles from the mouth of the Ganges, floating islands have been seen, composed of matted trees and soil with trees growing erect upon them. Many of these carry monkeys, storks, alligators, snakes, and tigers. Generally victims of the next storm, a few may have sailed safely before the steady summer winds to more than one lonely rock or sand-key, plants taken root, and animals multiplied there, before man came to reign over all. It is an interesting question to many, how animal and vegetable life spread over the earth; and our increasing knowledge of deep-sea currents explains much. All these things are received by the great universal ocean, and by it distributed far and wide.

No trees grow in the Aleutian Islands, and the ancient forests of Iceland are exhausted, so the natives of both depend entirely for fuel upon the supply of drift-wood cast up by the waves. The Aleutian islanders owe theirs to the 'Black Stream' of Japan bearing the camphor-tree and others from China and Japan. Quantities of American drift-wood, with fruits of trees, pericarps of cocoa-nuts, cashew nuts, &c. from the Antilles, are cast ashore upon Norway, Spitzbergen, Ferro, Orkney, and the Hebrides, especially after westerly storms. The masses thrown upon Jan Mayen Island often equal the island itself in extent. The red cedar of California, and various large trees from the Columbia river, are found strewn along the shores of Johnston's Islands in the North Pacific, lat. 17° N., long. 169° 30' W. To explain how they came there, Maury calls in two agencies: the cold California current that drifts them to the tropic; and the north-east trade-wind, by which they are then 'wafted along to the west.' It will be remarked that here he acknowledges the equal power of the currents and the trades, especially as this case touches the weaker of the two winds, the north-east. Does he really mean, while denying to the trade-winds the smallest part in creating the Gulf Stream, or any other current, to attribute to them a force sufficient to drift large trees, almost if not quite submerged, across a motionless sea? Fifty years ago, every one believed the motion of currents to be entirely caused by winds; and although that notion has broken down with a good many others beneath the blows of Captain Maury and the great army of progressionists, we must still believe that the winds have some share, if a slight one, in these regular movements.

The rivers of the earth hold a quantity of earthy matter suspended in their waters, and so do their fellows of the ocean. Minute particles of earth sink very slowly in water, because their extent of surface, and consequently their resistance, is greater in proportion than their weight. Probably the attrition of the waves grinds them still finer than when they emerge from fresh water, and besides, the stream will carry them some distance before they have time to sink at all. The sediment of the Amazons is carried by the enormous volume of fresh water along the coast of Guiana, where it has formed a swamp bordered by 'muddy shoals rapidly becoming land.' The sediment borne by some currents is so considerable that it is even said the North Sea is gradually filling up from no other cause. To Volney, the Grand Bank of Newfoundland appeared like the bar of a shoreless river; and so far he was right, only that his river was the

Gulf Stream, and Maury's is the polar current. Little of this earthy sediment is to be found in the coral seas. Pure water is necessary to the wonderful insects that build those stony barriers dotting the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Into these oceans, few large rivers empty themselves; the currents are broad and slow, and impregnated with lime, at once the food and building-material of the coral polypes. But an atoll or circle of reefs has always an opening into the clear blue lagoon, paved with the most delicate and brilliantly-coloured corals; and through this opening the water rushes, bringing sea-weed, drifted seeds and plants, which are washed aside upon the flat banks of white rock, already covered with dazzling sand, blocks of dead coral, and detritus thrown up by the surf. After a while, a soil is formed, some of the vegetable substances take root, and aided by seed-carrying birds, a wreath of small islands springs up, green with cocoa palms and bread-fruit trees. Some atolls enclose a mountainous island in their centre; and then, if there be a river descending from the high-land, it enters the lagoon opposite the opening in the encircling reef, for the madrepores shun the slightest earthy sediment, such as a river is sure to bring. They leave it a free passage to the sea, and continue their massive walls on either side. The cocoa-nut is most easily transported from shore to shore, because it possesses in a high degree the two characteristics which enable a fruit to remain long in salt water without losing its vitality—an oily nature and a strong shell.

Not only is this lower life dispersed by the currents, but man too is affected by them. The idea conceived by Columbus of a western continent was confirmed by the fact of trees and bodies of strange men being stranded on the Azores. In 1508, a French ship captured an Esquimaux canoe containing seven men, near the English coast, and Esquimaux have several times been driven in their canoes by storms to the Orcaes. The wreck of a Japanese junk was drifted to the Sandwich Islands with her surviving crew. In this it is easy to trace the agency of the Black Stream of Japan, as the foregoing instances may be attributed to that of the Gulf Stream. Stories are on record of Pacific islanders having helplessly drifted for months before seeing land, and undoubtedly many islands have been peopled in this way. Humboldt says that some casks of palm-oil, belonging to the cargo of a vessel wrecked near Cape Lopez, were carried across the Atlantic by the equatorial current, and made a second passage with the Gulf Stream to the coast of Scotland, where they were found. A similar thing has happened to more than one wrecked cargo in the West Indies.

Much information regarding the set of currents has resulted from the modern practice of throwing tightly-corked bottles, containing papers, into the sea at a certain spot, and marking the locality in which they are found, often with an interval of years between. 'Bottle-charts' have even been constructed, shewing the tracks these insignificant explorers must have followed on their unseen course, and it is not too much to say that they have been of material use to science and navigation. It is now a frequent custom among ship-captains, yet the first bottle was found so recently as 1809. Very curious facts it and its successors have proved. Let us take an instance. The *Enterprise* and *Investigator* discovery

ships, sent in search of Sir John Franklin, parted company in the Atlantic, February 1, 1850. The *Enterprise* threw a bottle overboard on the 3d of March following, in lat. $1^{\circ} 7' N.$, long. $26^{\circ} 48' 30'' W.$, and it was found on the beach about half-way between Belize and the Bay of Ascension, Honduras, some time after. The *Investigator* committed hers to the seas February 22, in lat. $12^{\circ} 25' N.$, long. $26^{\circ} 5' W.$, and it was picked up at Ambergris Key the following August, having 'made a course $W. 6\frac{1}{2} N.$, about 3600 miles, at the rate of 17 miles per day.' The remarkable part of the story is that, although the two bottles were thrown over at places 700 miles apart, they followed almost exactly the same track, and were cast upon the same shore (thirty miles apart), clearly demonstrating that they both fell within the limits of the wide-spreading equatorial current.

The currents of the two great oceans, the sea and the air, are nearly equal. Their power is enormous, not only from the force immediately exercised, but from steady, regular, long-enduring pressure, impossible to stop or resist. Their influence is felt by all, though chiefly by the creatures of each particular element. As the strong, eternal winds scatter man over the world to bring it into subjection to his wisdom, so do the currents of the wide seas spread their more prolific and abundant life silently but not less surely. If with the one sail the frigate and clipper-ship, with the other drift the birch canoe and sea-grass, to form a garden out of a rock before the white-faced strangers come to visit it. A well-known French writer says: 'There is nothing small in nature, it is a human conception.' Let us say nothing is weak, nothing is mean but to the eyes of ignorance. All things, even the waifs of the sea, fill their appointed place in this magnificent, if inexorable empire.

THE LADIES' JOY.

BACHELORS may talk of female suffrage, and tell us of the passionate yearning for a vote that fills the heart of every sensible woman; they may eulogise her enthusiasm for all that is great, and noble, and impracticable, as much as they please; but they will never influence the opinion of us married men until they are married themselves. They remind us of those who praise 'the Establishment' and its ministers to the uttermost, and excuse the length, as well as the shortcomings, of all sermons, and yet who are never seen at church. We know—when all is said and done—that nothing is so attractive to the fairer portion of humanity as a Good Bargain. It was not (if the whole truth were known) the mere apple that tempted Eve, you may depend upon it, but the idea that she was somehow or other getting the better of the Serpent.

There are some things, indeed, which render this weakness excusable in woman. She has generally but little command of money—often much less than ought to be intrusted to her—and it is therefore necessary to make it go as far as she can. She has no opportunity of dabbling in stocks and shares, of betting, or of gambling—which, in one form or another, is the master-passion of the human race; and a Bargain is the only way in which she can both enjoy a little harmless excitement and turn an honest penny. The delight

which the Female takes in 'Shopping' is, to the married Male, as inexplicable as it is deplorable. It is what fire-water is to the untutored savage, or what appearing in print is to the sucking author—not, indeed, a natural want, but an artificial requirement of the most insatiable description. She must shop, or she must die. You have only to look at the windows of the first millinery establishment to be convinced of this; the stores therein displayed attract female passers-by exactly as the fly-catcher tempts its victims. They cannot get away from that highly-decorated snare. They apply such words of endearment to those inanimate objects as properly belong to us, their liege lords, alone. 'What a *love* of a bonnet! What a *darling* piece of lace! And, O Jemima' (who is their companion and confidante), 'how cheap!'

Acting upon this well-known and lamentable weakness of the female mind, some person, or persons, have hit upon a plan whereby women shall be enabled to 'shop' without money (though not, alas! without its equivalent), and 'bargain' without going out of doors. The greatest happiness is thus, as it were, brought to the fireside of every woman: and, for my part, I wish it was in the fire. The fact is, the device in question, which is fast becoming an institution with the wives and daughters of England, is in the form of a newspaper, called *The Exchange and Mart*. By means of this, and the use of a Register number, a lady may exchange any article she pleases for some other (which she indicates), or sell it, if she prefers a pecuniary equivalent. *The Exchange* effects the first for her, and the *Mart* the second; and all her time is now taken up with corresponding with the editors of one of these two periodicals. Besides offering her these objectionable facilities for traffic, these gentlemen introduce to her notice the catalogues of coming auction-sales, and the programme of the most expensive amusements; and, altogether, are perhaps the two most dangerous enemies with whom Paterfamilias has ever had to contend.

Among the sapient utterances of a public nature which we have lately listened to, was one of a certain Archdeacon, who stigmatises all newspapers as most pernicious stuff, and it is our charitable faith that this outrageous statement must have been made on the instant of the Very Venerable gentleman's discovery that his wife and daughters had swopped away his personal apparel—perhaps even his canonicals—for gewgaws, through the medium of *The Exchange*. I believe I have hit upon the very advertisement: 'Twelve white ties: offers wanted: will take almost anything.' Of course they will, if they abstracted them from the archdeacon's drawer!

They don't stick at sacrilege, these ladies, when they are in want of a little ready money. 'Oak lectern, L.2; faldstool, L.1.' Where, it is evident, they have been robbing a church.

Sentiment is an excellent thing, and held in high favour by the female sex; but what do you think of this? 'A wedding ring: and a turquoise and pearl one. Money offers requested.' After this, it will surprise none to learn that Engaged Rings—little pledges of an affair that never ripened to maturity—are advertised by the bushel. 'Lady's handsome ring, rubies, pearls, and emerald. Price L.1.' That is cheap enough surely, even without the sentiment; but there is yet a cheaper. 'Lady's very elegant gold ring, set with imitation stones. Price

108. *A great bargain.* There are fourteen of these ring advertisements in the copy of the *Mart* before us, and perhaps a dozen of them symbolise a broken heart. Here is a nice little statement, indicative of tender feeling, under the head of *Jewellery*. 'Jet set, necklace with nine pendants, ear-rings, lady's mourning ring, "In memory of —." Only good useful offers accepted.' That means that the poor distracted creature will exchange her mournful token of the departed, for an imitation sealskin jacket, or a real monkey-muff.

There is nothing that these advertisers are not prepared to part with for a genuine sealskin. 'Wanted, a handsome sealskin; length not less than 24 inches. Will be given in exchange: garden-roller, 1 cwt.; plated tea-urn; musical box, 4 tunes; open front, cast-iron stove, with stand complete, suitable for a hall.'

Is this woman, then, prepared to strip the garden and the tea-table, and to deprive the house of warmth, for a single article of outdoor apparel? Again: 'I want a handsome real sealskin jacket. Offer jewellery, lace (real), handsome walnut-wood drawers, American churn, foreign poultry, fox-terrier, and handsome books.' We could quote a score of these impassioned outcries for a sealskin. But only read what sacrifices will be made for a very inferior article. 'Wanted, a grebe muff. Offered, double perambulator in good condition.' This unhappy woman is about to deprive her infants of the means of locomotion for a grebe muff!

'I have two smoking-chairs' — But no; this *Journal* shall not be made the medium of such an advertisement as that. How can she have two smoking-chairs? Little will her husband suspect the fate of those two elements of comfort, which his friend and he were wont to enjoy, before his wife appeared in that elegant 'hat with cock-pheasant's breast plume.' I wonder whether the Archdeacon used to smoke.

Furs and Feathers, Jewellery and Dresses, are of course, however, the chief articles of sale or barter; and the advertisements of some of these are strange enough. By the regulations of the periodical, advertisements of worn apparel (excepting furs, feathers, artificial flowers, and lace) are not inserted; and how comes it that so much new clothing is in the market? Shawls and jackets, hats and handkerchiefs, and linen 'never once been on?' Paniers and Parasols, Pelerines and Peplams (or Pepla, if that be their plural), and Stockings and Sashes, and Trimmings! How comes it that these are all to be had for money, or money's worth, just as they came out of the shop in which they were bought? In some shape or other, Paterfamilias paid for them, or most of them, I suppose; and this desire to part with them must seem to him, to say the least of it, suspicious. At the same time, there are doubtless many ladies who, keeping within their own allowance, have a perfect right to do what they will with their wardrobes. In some cases, there is an evident superfluity. '*Berceaulette*; a perfectly new and handsome berceauette, given as a present; but having two' [the grammar of these lady advertisers is wonderful], 'both new, given to me, I wish to sell the best, and only ask L2, 14s.' A more ample provision had been made, you see, than was necessary: only one Little Stranger arrived, where a couple of them had apparently been

expected. Sometimes the disappointment is much sadder. The amount of '*perfectly new baby linen*' advertised would set up a Lilliputian millinery establishment. In vain the 'Welcome' has been inscribed upon the pincushion; the 'Little Stranger' never arrives.

'I have two charming little pinafores for a baby three or four months old, made of the best fine diaper, trimmed with real Valenciennes lace; a great improvement on the old-fashioned bibs, and quite new.' Again: 'Two lovely little knickerbockers, embroidery frills.' After these, the offers of Antimacassars, Embroidery, and Tatting—very frequent, and quite a legitimate branch of commerce—seem commonplace and uninteresting.

Of course, there are some male advertisers—the smoking-chairs, although we made fun of them, were doubtless the offer of some poor wretch on the very verge of matrimony, and about to part with his comforts at a tremendous sacrifice. But the vast majority are females. Some of them—young ladies, probably, who have outrun their pin-money—are very hard up. 'Two pair new dog-skin gloves, double buttons, size 6½' [nice little girl]. 'Cost 3s. each. Price 2s., or offers.' Ring-doves are quite a common article of barter. 'I have a hen ring-dove, which I will sell for 2s.; purchaser to pay carriage.' Here's a shocking one: 'Yellow nuns (now sitting), L2; and also 2 red jacobins' [what company for the nuns to be in!], for which offers are requested.' Those are under the head of Pigeons, and so are these: '4 yellow balds, 4 mottled tumblers, 4 yellow jacobins, 2 fantails, 2 owls, 2 turbits, 2 trumpeters; cheap.' The address is 'Lancashire,' though one would have expected to see 'Poultry.'

Sale and Barter harden the heart. 'I have a beautiful little black and tan terrier, *very affectionate*. I would exchange him for articles useful to a lady to the value of three guineas.' Greed will induce these women to sell anything—even the sweetest cats. 'Tabby cat, handsome, perfectly clean, *very affectionate*. Nay, even kittens. 'Black with white feet, half-Persian kittens. 2s. each. Carriage to be paid by purchaser.' Such an advertiser would sell her baby to the sausage-makers. Let us turn from such terrible pictures. Even the Avarice so patent in the following is preferable to such Inhumanity: 'Wanted, all kinds of coins (not tokens).' We wonder whether she would take coppers.

Here is evidently a convalescent who wishes to dispose of her crutches in exchange, as it were, for a leaping-pole: 'I will give a basket-carriage, value L15, or a Bath-chair, value L12, for a strong horse, about 15 hands, of the same value.' This advertiser must be unacquainted with Tattersall's, or she would hardly expect such a bargain in the way of horse-flesh as this. Here is another sanguine young creature: 'Wanted a light phaeton four-wheel dog-cart, suitable for a horse 15 hands. Offer in exchange a very handsome pair'—of what do you think?—'of pug puppies, the purest blood in England.' Good blood has certainly a fancy price with some people. 'A donkey from Tetuan, small and gentle, but spirited; good in saddle [*sic*]; *quite a pet*. Offers invited.' Here we get among the hard-hearted ones again: 'Gilt chignon comb, with bird *attached*.' Nay, even 'an interesting situation' fails to appeal to the feelings of these wretches: 'Two nanny-goats;

will breed next spring. Will take anything useful.' Here is an advertiser of a strange taste, bidding for what auctioneers call 'a scaly lot.' 'I want two or three common English lizards. How much would be required?' Here is another queer one: 'Offered, a very large cow, half fat.'

Under the head of 'Books,' we come upon some curious facts. In spite of what we are so perpetually being told by the Archdeacon and his school of Public Teachers, good fiction is not ceasing to be popular, nor likely to be supplanted by wishy-washy works of sentiment, or even by the most useful information. 'Will any one give me any of the Waverley Novels, or Marryatt's, or Dickens's, in exchange for the first three volumes of *Recreative Science*, a most interesting and instructive work? Or will any one lend me any of them, in exchange for the gift of *Say and Seal*, *The Wide, Wide World*, *Judah's Lion*, James's *Anxious Inquirer*, &c.?' Here is a shocking one: 'Byron's *Don Juan*: contains the suppressed passages: offers of anything.' We beg to offer a lucifer-match, and hope the advertiser will use it to burn the book.

Under Magazines, we find: 'Wanted, striped petticoat for short costume; would post in exchange *Belgravia*, *Argosy*, *Temple Bar*, or *Cassell's Magazine*, before 10th of month, any length of time that may be wished.' The advertiser, in fact, considers a short petticoat equal in value to any of these respectable periodicals in perpetuity! Let us here close our investigations; for what a frightful thing it would be, Mr Editor, to come upon any bid of this description in connection with *Chambers's Journal*!

A ROMANCE OF LEICESTER SQUARE.

CHAPTER I.—THE BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.

ONE of the peculiarities of London is, that its houses have no physiognomy: you cannot tell from the exteriors what they are likely to be inside. The stranger who is looking out for a dinner may very likely be attracted by a clean, bright-looking window, as gay as plate-glass, artificial flowers, and real fruit artistically set out can make it; and so he enters a low dingy apartment, divided into pews, in each of which is a table spread with a coarse cloth, porter and gravy stained, filthy knives and forks, and a cruet-stand which no one would ever use who once saw it in broad daylight; here too he is served with abominably dressed viands; whereas, if he had chanced to enter a low gloomy passage a hundred yards off, he would have emerged into a bright, handsome, lofty hall, where both essentials and accessories were adapted to the most refined tastes and habits. The most solid banks in appearance are rarely so in reality, and more business is done in pokey offices than in palatial ones. It is the same with churches, theatres, and private dwelling-houses; you cannot tell their characters from their outside.

Now, any one taking a short cut from Oxford Street to Leicester Square, and passing through Frogmore Place, would hardly feel tempted to make his home in that locality, unless economy combined with a central situation were of very great importance to him, or he were a disciple of Mark Tapley, and desirous of testing that great philosopher's method to the utmost. The shops

do not seem thriving; there is very little traffic; a plague-like stillness pervades the street. More smuts alight on your nose than in other thoroughfares; the bricks look worm-eaten—as perhaps they are, for it is wonderful what digestions some insects have—the mortar deficient, the windows dusty; nor has it occurred to any landlord since the days of Queen Anne that a coat of paint might be beneficial to the outer wood-work. Number six was not distinguishable from the other houses by any external attributes, and yet when you opened the front-door and entered the passage, you found yourself in a different atmosphere. The oil-cloth and wall-paper were of the cheapest description, but tastefully chosen, clean and bright; the stair carpet, again, though of common drugget, had a new, fresh, well-brushed look; and you would not have hesitated to lay hold of the banisters in white kid gloves. But it was in the sitting-room on the first floor that the contrast between the inside and outside of the house was most striking. There were three large mirrors with broad gilt frames upon the walls; two highly ornamented and sentimental time-pieces pointed to different hours, and were both wrong; the chairs and sofas were of red velvet and gilded nails; the table-cover was gorgeous; and fragile knick-knacks, some funny, others pastoral, but all glittering or pretty, were arranged wherever they could add to the general cheerful effect. This was the home of Monsieur Jules Menars and his daughter Marie, who breakfasted every morning at eleven, off meat, fruit, flowers, and light wine, and used napkins at the meal, like benighted foreigners as they were.

'I am ready for the coffee, my cabbage,' said M. Menars, a middle-aged, middle-sized man, clean shaved with the exception of a bushy moustache, which he wiped as he spoke.

'Directly, little papa,' replied the girl, a graceful brunette; and she tripped out of the room. She returned in five minutes with an envelope in her hand, as well as the coffee-pot. 'O papa,' she cried, 'Monsieur Victor has given us an order for the Lyceum this evening. There is a new piece which is, oh, so beautiful; he says that there has never been one to equal it before! And there is an overture with a solo for him, which he plays all by himself; only think!'

'Ah, yes,' said her father, rolling up a cigarette; 'I have noticed that that is a peculiarity of solos. Victor has talent, and will make his way. As for the play, I daresay that it is very good; but the London plays always seem to me a little sad. The English can paint fine scenery, and accomplish wonderful effects, but they cannot act like the French, truly not! If we were going to see a Parisian vaudeville this evening, now—ah!'

'Ah, yes. How I should like to see Paris again; I was so young when we left!'

'See Paris. Why, so you probably will, either with me or another.—Aha! there is the sound of Victor's flageolet; no doubt he is practising the new music.'

'Yes, papa; how soft and sweet it sounds, coming through the ceiling!'

'Hum; I am glad that his instrument is not the ophicleide, certainly.' And so M. Menars touched and evaded a question which was the puzzle of his daughter's life: why did they live in England? He could not be an exile on political grounds, because he received a pension from his government,

which, together with what he got for giving fencing-lessons to a few pupils, and her earnings as a maker of artificial flowers, at which she was very skilful, kept their little household in some comfort indeed, but did not go so far as, from all accounts, it would have done in their own country. Since Marie wanted to know her father's reasons for residing in England, why did she not ask him the question directly? Because there was something about M. Menars which prevented every one, even his favourite child, from pressing a subject which he evidently wished to avoid. Marie was five years old when her mother died, and her father brought her over to England twelve years before, and she had an indistinct recollection of seeing him in uniform, with a sword by his side. She asked him once if he had not been a soldier, and he replied: 'O yes; he had been drawn in the conscription like the others;' and hurried, as ever, from the topic of his former life. Of course the girl had her theory of his reticence, and of course it was a romantic one. He could not recover from the shock of her mother's death, nor bear, even at this distance of time, any allusion to the period, the places, or the scenes which recalled her. An improbable solution, if the novelists and dramatists of Gaul hold the mirror up to nature at all; but it satisfied her, and that was the principal thing. Besides, I expect that our neighbours love their wives occasionally, though they are so bitter against them.

Victor Bernardi was a young Italian musician who had come over to England to make his fortune, and who found the meaning of that vague expression expand weekly. A fortune in Italy is not a fortune in London, and a bachelor's competence may be downright penury if he indulges in a wife and family. The young musician, however, had real talent, and would probably have secured a better place in the race of life by this time, had he not been heavily weighted with a secret care at starting—a care which made him listless, absent, perpetually apprehensive. But as time passed on, and that which he feared happened not, he revived, and then he met Marie, and the nightmare of his youth vanished, or, if it returned upon him at times, it was as a vague horror belonging to a former state of existence, from which he was now happily free. Nothing ran counter to the current of his happiness now; Marie returned his love, which was of Italian passionateness; her father approved it; lack of fortune alone remained, but that was to be remedied by industry and earnestness. In the meantime, the young people amused themselves with building those castles in the air which the dull sneer at so stupidly; for is not heaven in the air?

It was a pretty little supper that awaited them on returning from the theatre that evening. Not an extravagant meal—a meagre one indeed to some English ideas—but most temptingly laid out. The young musician was delayed a little, so that the others arrived before him, and Marie had plenty of time to put her finishing touches. Ah, there is a deal of coquetry in the decoration of a table, if young ladies only knew it; though some of them do, bless them! that and a great deal more than I could tell them; only, they are sometimes too proud or lazy to devote their talents to the decoration of anything but their own fair persons, which is lily-painting.

'Did you notice, papa, how the people applauded Victor's solo?'

'Yes, my dear; and I think that I could even mention the leader of the *claque*.'

'Oh!' cried Marie, turning away and blushing, 'I am sure I did not clap half so loud as—as you yourself, for example.'

'Doubtless you did not. My great flappers are more effective, so far as volume of sound goes, than your little flies' paws. The goose could express his delight in a way to drown the voice of the bullfinch, but some persons would prefer to hear the smaller bird. And here is one of them,' added M. Menars, as Victor Bernardi entered the room, bearing in his hand a roll of pink tissue-paper, which proved, when unfolded, to contain a bottle of champagne, which he placed on the table with a triumphant air. Marie, the little gourmand, uttered a cry of pleasure; M. Menars shook his head.

'It is an occasion,' said Victor apologetically.—'What do you think the director had to say to me? Why, that my salary is to be raised!—Ah, but I have not done; there is better still. What do you say to an engagement to play at some concerts in the afternoon, which will not interfere with my duties at the theatre! I begin to see my way; and before Christmas, Monsieur Menars, I may claim from you the fulfilment of your promise.' Then ensued hand-shakings, congratulations, embracings; and the three sat down to a supper which was enlivened with jokes, laughter, and songs. Never did a bottle of champagne shed its benign influence over a happier group.

CHAPTER II.—DINNER AT A FIXED PRICE.

It is a wonderful example of the power of early education and habits, that strangers should be found in every country who insist upon dining badly, in imitation of the manner of their own homes, rather than adapt their tastes to those of the natives. The rich, indeed, dine well, and much after the same fashion, almost everywhere; it is among those who have to practise economy that the absurd practice is prevalent; and in every capital, enterprising purveyors make their profit out of it. The Englishman in Paris may earn indigestion in an uncomfortable box, with sawdust under his feet, and an absurd burlesque upon mutton-chops and beer before him; and the Frenchman in London can poison himself with bad viands and the most horrible concoction that ever was called wine, at a price which would give him a cut from a prime joint, floury potatoes, and a pint of excellent stout. Victor Bernardi was one of these gastronomical bigots, and because he had been used to dine off half-a-dozen nominally different dishes, with three nuts, a couple of raisins, and a shrivelled pear for dessert, and a pint of thin wine to mix with his water, in his childhood, he hankered after similar repasts still, and patronised a restaurant, where the fixed price was half-a-crown; and a very dear half-crown's worth it was, had he been unbiased.

At five o'clock, then, on the day after the little supper, he entered that establishment, as happy a man as ever sat down to dinner. He was excessively in love, and now for the first time since that accident happened to him had a good prospect of speedily obtaining the object of his desires, so there is no need to enlarge upon his

felicity. He felt, indeed, as if he trod upon air, but had no wish to live upon it; joy had damaged his sleep, but not his appetite; and he took his accustomed seat with a most unromantic intention not to cry 'Hold, enough!' till he reached his raisin. The place certainly looked perfectly foreign; and once past its portals, you might well imagine yourself in the Palais-Royal instead of the heart of London. At the entrance was a *comptoir*—it is hateful to use French words, but it is not a counter, nor is it a bar—with a dame from Paris enthroned behind it, amongst flowers and bottles; and as the customers entered, they touched their hats. The establishment was of triple nature, restaurant, café, billiard-room—the central and largest compartment being the café, which was separated from the other rooms, which ran along either side of it, by arches, which, in the case of the restaurant division, were glazed. Thus you dined in a gallery, along which ran a single row of tables, facing the arches, which were filled alternately with transparent plate-glass and mirrors; so that it depended upon your situation whether you admired yourself during the meal, or looked through into the café, and caught glimpses of the billiard-players through the corresponding arches beyond. Victor Bernardi placed himself in the latter position, and commenced his dinner. He sipped his blacking-water as if he liked it, swallowed the wash which was served for soup without a grimace; ate the tenth part of a fresh herring, with a caper on it, which was ushered in with a long name, and then became aware of an eye which was watching him through the window opposite. We are told that a cat may look at a king, and certainly his majesty is not likely to be annoyed by the inspection; but when a cat looks at a small bird, the case is different, and the gaze which was now fixed upon Victor seemed to exercise a like horrible influence upon him. It proceeded from a man, whose long hair, moustache, and beard were so intensely black that his bloodless pasty face looked quite unearthly by the contrast; while I can only describe the expression of his glance by saying that the least imaginative person who met it would have been enabled to understand the Italian superstition of the Evil Eye. He was dressed in black garments, which would have passed muster well enough by candle-light, but looked shabby and shining in the day; and over his shoulders was thrown a short cloak or cape, though the afternoon was a warm one. Directly the man saw that he had attracted Victor Bernardi's attention, he rose, passed out of the café into the restaurant, and came up to his table.

'The night is dark,' he murmured, bending over towards him.

'But the day is breaking,' replied Victor in faltering accents.

'Come to me when you have finished your repast; I await you.' And he returned to his former place, where Victor soon joined him, for swallowing another mouthful was quite out of the question. The young man had had time, however, to recover his presence of mind, and there was firmness in his voice when he said: 'What do you want with me, Pedro Nero? I cannot be forced into any fresh designs: I was freed from that by the task allotted to me; and now I have settled my life, and have other views than yours. Leave me in peace, and go your way.'

'I seek to force you into no fresh plot,' replied the other, 'but only to warn you that the task you are bound by oath to perform is yet unaccomplished.'

'And is that my fault?' asked Victor.

'I say not that it is your fault. No one brother has a right to judge the conduct of another; only to accuse, or to execute judgment. But there is no question of blame or praise. I am sent to warn you that the time has arrived for the performance of your task, and to see that you accomplish it.'

'But he is beyond my reach; he is dead.'

'Not so; he lives. More; he is in England, in London. Hark!' And the man placed his lips to Victor Bernardi's ear, and hissed a sentence which made his blood curdle. He literally gasped for breath; the room swam round, and he as nearly fainted as a man can without actually losing consciousness.

'I do not believe it!' he gasped at length.

'Yes, you do,' replied the other; 'but if you require proofs, you shall have them. Meet me when your theatre has closed. And now, rouse yourself: it is time that you should go, and suspicion must not be excited by any alteration in your way of life.'

What a happy thing it is that our habits are stronger than our passions. It increases the responsibility of life, perhaps, because the former are for the most part contracted of our own free will, and deliberately; but it makes us much more useful to one another socially. How inconvenient it would be if the baker, when jilted, forgot to make his bread; or the hairdresser clipped my ear off in a state of pecuniary embarrassment; or the doctor could not attend to his patients when his own child lay a-dying. Victor Bernardi went to the Lyceum, took his place in the orchestra, played his music correctly, without full consciousness of what he was doing. It was the same thing the next day, and the next day, and the next. He could hardly believe that he was really eating, drinking, walking, playing; but it seemed to him that he must awake presently, and find all a nightmare. He avoided the Menars, who began to be alarmed for him. Twice he met Marie on the staircase, and stopped; but he did not seem able to make up his mind to say what he wanted; and after gazing upon her with an agonised look, he buried his face in his hands, and fled.

'He is ill. Your musical men are always highly nervous, and apt to be queer for a while,' said M. Menars to his daughter; but what he said to himself was: 'The young man is either touched in the brain, or he has committed a bad crime; and whichever it is, he is not a fit husband for my Marie. It is a pity, too, for I liked him.'

CHAPTER III.—A CONFESSION IN ST JAMES'S PARK.

On the fourth day, Victor Bernardi recovered, not his happiness indeed, but his calmness, his presence of mind. He watched for M. Menars to leave the house, and hurried after him.

'I wish to speak with you privately,' he said.

'Shall we return?' asked M. Menars, pausing.

'No, no; Marie might come in. I must speak with you undisturbed. Come with me to St James's Park.'

They walked together in silence to the *rus in urbe* mentioned, and as it was early in the day,

found it as deserted as Victor had anticipated. There were a few nursemaids and children; a pair or two of lovers; a sprinkling of the lower class of criminals, who had been prowling about all night, and had now got over the iron railings, and were sleeping on the grass; no one likely to notice them.

'I have a confession to make,' Victor began. 'When I was very young, before I left my home, and saw what the real world was like, I was very romantic. I lived in a world of poetry and imagination; and as love had not yet spoken to my heart, it was in friendship that I found a vent for my affections. My friend was a politician, an ardent democrat, a devout believer in utopian schemes for the regeneration of mankind; and he infected me with his enthusiasm. So there came a day when he proposed to me that I should become enrolled among the members of a secret society. The mere fact that he belonged to it would have decided me; but the mystery, the secret meetings, the unknown dangers, had an irresistible charm for me, and I embraced his offer with insane joy; nor was it until it was too late to retract that I discovered to what I had really pledged myself. Then, indeed, I was so horror-struck, that the sympathy I had once had with the ends and aims of the fraternity died in my repugnance to the means employed; I avoided all participation in its schemes as much as I could from the first, and it was the desire I felt to escape from the toils into which I had blindly rushed which determined me to come to England. Before I left, however, I was summoned to a meeting of the fraternity, at which the destiny of my life was sealed. Years and years before, a brother had been pursued to the death by some member of the French police, whom the chiefs had hitherto failed to identify; but a recent political trial, in the course of which the events of a former conspiracy were brought to light, had revealed him; and the present assembly was convened for the double purpose of sentencing him to death, and deciding by lot whose hand should carry out the decree. For the lapse of time signified nothing; the vengeance of the society never dies. The lot fell to me!

'I was allowed to carry out my intention of pursuing the musical profession in England, for the present habitation of the condemned man was not known, and it was suspected that he was living under an assumed name in that country; but I was to hold myself in readiness to seek and slay him at a word or a sign. It was with this horror upon me that I commenced life; it was with the ever-haunting thought that I was destined for an assassin, I who could not bear to see an animal in pain, that I addressed myself to earn my bread in a foreign land. It was that necessity, and the music, which brought me the relief of opium, which prevented my going mad during the first year of constant dread and expectation. At the end of that time, I began to hope that the signal which had been so long delayed would never be given, and my spirits recovered; and then I met Marie, and loved her. But I did not intimate my love by word or sign, while there was yet a chance that the hand which would fain have clasped hers might become stained with blood. It was not until I heard that the man I had sworn to murder was dead, and felt myself freed from the horrible

chain which had bound me, that I sought to win her, and found, to my intense joy, that I was beloved in return, and that you, her father, approved of me. I will not speak of my happiness, of the new life which sprang up within me—you know it, you have witnessed it. But now my hopes are shattered, my short summer has passed away, for it was a false report which asserted that the man who had incurred the vengeance of the Brotherhood had eluded their grasp; and you—you are Simon Sartènes, the man I am bidden to slay!

Here, Victor, who had hitherto controlled his feelings, in order to tell his story clearly, threw himself upon a seat, and buried his face in his hands. M. Menars had listened to him without apparent surprise, calmly smoking his cigarette: when he heard that he himself was the denounced man, he took it from his lips, and blew the smoke out through his nostrils.

'Aha!' he said, 'I was to have been the victim, then; only I happen to have a pretty daughter, and so my executioner hesitates. There are advantages in being a parent, then, after all.—But, come, come,' he continued in a graver tone, patting the young man's shoulder; 'I understand something of men, and under no circumstances could you have brought yourself to draw knife or pistol on one who was unarmed. Oh! I know all about your oaths, and how terribly they work upon the imaginations of those who take them; but you would have preferred perjury to murder.'

'I cannot say what I might have done,' replied Victor Bernardi, raising his head. 'There is but one resource left me now. Farewell for ever; tell Marie that my last thoughts were for her.'

'Bah! Victor; you must not commit suicide to avoid the vengeance of the Brothers; that would be cowardly; besides, it is not common-sense. England is not Italy, or even France; and the hand of the assassin falters here, where the arm of the law is so long and strong, and where juries are not used to append the saving clause of "extenuating circumstances" to their verdicts.'

'But the vengeance of the society extends to the wife and children of the member who turns traitor. Marie can never be mine, and how can I live without her!'

'Come, be calm, if you can,' said M. Menars. 'Sit down again, Victor, and listen to me. You have been duped, deceived; I am not Simon Sartènes. He is dead, as you were truly informed. It is true that I was formerly an agent of police, and that I live in England because, in the zealous prosecution of my duty, I incurred the vengeance of a powerful political fraternity. It is also true that I worked much in concert with Sartènes, and that we often adopted the same names and disguises, in order to throw our enemies off the track. But all this must be well known to the chiefs of the Sons of the Morning Star.—Oh, you need divulge nothing; I know more of your fraternity and its members than you do yourself; and believe me it is a private and personal vengeance which has sought to turn your hand against me.'

'But with what object? I know not of an enemy,' gasped Victor, whose brain reeled under these sudden transitions from despair to hope.

'If the man who told you that Simon Sartènes lives, and that I am he, was the villain known as Pedro Nero—Ah, you start, and I have guessed

correctly. The matter is simple then. Pedro Nero loves Marie, and attempted a year ago to abduct her from her home, sending a false message which purported to come from me while I was away. Happily, I returned sooner than was expected, prevented the crime, and punished the cowardly wretch as he deserved. He hates me, then; he hates you too, because Marie loves you. What a vengeance it would have been for him if he had succeeded in turning your hand against my life!

'Oh, I see it all!' cried Victor. 'Let him not cross my path, or I shall be tempted to become an assassin in very truth!'

'You can do better than that,' replied M. Menars. 'Denounce him to the Central Committee as having attempted to make use of his authority for his own private ends to the injury of a brother.'

'No, never again will I hold any communication with the fraternity,' said Victor with a shudder.

'Then leave him to God. And now come home, and set Marie's mind at rest, for she cannot think what is the matter with you.'

Victor Bernardi has never heard anything more of Pedro Nero, or of the secret society of which he was so inefficient a member. Soon after his confession in St James's Park, he was in a position to furnish a house in Kensington; and before a year had elapsed, he took Marie to it as his wife—a room being appropriated to M. Menars, who lives with them. They give delightful little parties, for Bernardi is well known in artistic and dramatic circles, and composes a good deal of the light music which is just now in such great demand for ballets and extravaganza. Some of his children may perhaps take to the lyric stage; there is a small Bernardi who has a powerful voice, but it is not harmonious at present.

A HOUSE OF MYSTERY.

PERHAPS there is no edifice in London to which so much Wonder and Romance have clung as that whose erection was due to good Thomas Coram, master-mariner, and which is known as the Foundling Hospital. Secrecy has enveloped the dwelling for a hundred and twenty years, and might have done so to all time, had not a Royal Commission let light into it. What materials has it not furnished to the novelist and the playwright—what dreams to the imagination of the young! Only a year or two ago it formed the theme of a Christmas Number, written by our two most famous writers of fiction, and was dramatised by them, and set before our eyes by our foremost actors. Let us pass behind the curtain, which Mr Wrottesley, the Commissioner, has raised for a few inches or so, and see what little there is to be seen. In the petition which Coram makes for a charter, backed by 'a memorial signed by twenty-one ladies of quality and distinction,' he recites that 'no expedient has been found out for preventing the frequent murders of poor infants at their birth, or of suppressing the custom of exposing them to perish in the streets, or putting them out to nurses' [baby-farmers of the past], 'who, undertaking to bring them up for small sums, suffered them to starve, or, if permitted to live, either turned them out to beg or steal, or hired them out to persons,

by whom they were trained up in that way of living, and sometimes blinded or maimed, in order to move pity, and thereby become fitter instruments of gain to their employers.' In order to redress this shameful grievance, the memorialists express their willingness to erect and support a hospital for all helpless children as may be brought to it, 'in order that they may be made good servants, or, when qualified, be disposed of to the sea or land service of His Majesty the king.'

The children who are maintained by this charity are admitted on application of their mothers only, whose application to the governors must take place within twelve months of the birth of the child. The following is the printed form of petition:

'The Petition of (name) of (place of abode):

HUMBLY SHEWETH

That your petitioner is a (widow or spinster), () years of age, and was on the () day of () delivered of a (male or female) child, which is wholly dependent on your petitioner for its support, being deserted by the father. That (father's name) is the father of the said child, and was, when your petitioner became acquainted with him, a (his trade), at (residence when the acquaintance began), and your petitioner last saw him on the () day of (), and believes he is now (what is become of him). Your petitioner, therefore, humbly prays that you will be pleased to receive the said child into the afore-said Hospital.'

The instructions appended to this printed form state that no money is ever received for the admission of children, nor fee nor perquisite to be taken by any officer of the hospital. And, it may be added, that no recommendation is necessary to the success of a petitioner's claim.

Each petition is read to the governors assembled in committee; and the petitioner is called in and examined as to her allegations; and then the steward of the hospital (with the petitioner's permission) is instructed to make secret inquiries as to the truth of the case. If the admission be ordered, it takes place on the Saturday fortnight after the order (a small weekly allowance being made in the interim, if necessary, to the mother), when the child is examined by the apothecary, and if found perfect in eyes, limbs, and health, is received into the Institution. Its mother is presented with a certificate of its reception—with a certain letter on the margin, by which her infant pledge may be subsequently identified if necessary; but in all probability she never sees the child again. It has a particular number assigned to it, which is sewn to its clothes, and becomes a property and chattel of the hospital. It is at once sent to the matron's room, and delivered to a wet-nurse previously engaged; and on the following day, being Sunday, it is baptised in the chapel of the institution—some common name, such as Smith or Jones, being given to it, out of a list approved by the committee. On the same night, or following day, it is sent with its nurse into the country, who carries it to her own residence—she being generally the wife of some agricultural labourer—and reared there, under the occasional supervision of inspectors, for five years, when it returns to town for its education at the hospital. The number attached to its clothes remains so attached throughout that time.

At fourteen, the boys, at fifteen, the girls, are apprenticed, but still looked after by inspectors from the hospital until they are twenty-one years of age, when they are supposed to be able to take care of themselves. Deserving adults, however, are not lost sight of by the governors, and in case of incurable infirmities preventing apprenticeship, the hospital does not desert its children to the end. That the child be illegitimate, is of course the most essential regulation, but an exception is made if the father be a soldier or sailor killed in the service of his country. Immediately after the battle of Waterloo, it was enacted that fifteen children of each sex should be forthwith admitted, the offspring of those who fell in that action; but, to the honour of our soldiers' wives, it is recorded that only two mothers gave way to the temptation, and accepted the offer. No legitimate child has been admitted into the hospital for the last ten years. The other conditions of admission are: that the petitioner shall not have applied for parish relief; that she shall have borne a good character previous to her misfortune; and that the father shall have *bona fide* deserted his offspring, and be not forthcoming. The child acquires stronger claims for admission, if (1) the petitioner has no relations able to maintain the child; (2) if her shame is known to few persons (the express wish of the founder being that she might, if possible, recover her lost position); and (3) that in the event of the child's being received, the petitioner has a prospect of obtaining an honest livelihood.

The institution was first established in 1740, in a house hired for the time in Hatton Garden, and was originally based upon the plan pursued 'in France, Holland, and other Christian countries.' The applicant came in at the outward door, rung the bell at the inward door, and presented her child; no questions whatever were asked of her, nor did 'any servant of the hospital presume to endeavour to discover who such person was, on pain of being dismissed.' When the narrow limit of accommodation was reached, the notice, 'The house is full,' was affixed over the door. In October 1745, the western wing of the present building was opened; but so many more children were brought than the place could hold, that there were frequently a hundred women with children at the door, when only twenty could be admitted. The ballot was then resorted to: all the women were admitted into the court-room, and drew balls out of a bag; but it was still stipulated that if any desired to be concealed, the bag might be carried to them, or the matron was empowered to draw for them. In 1754, the hospital authorities had six hundred children to support, the cost of which exceeded their income fourfold. They therefore appealed to parliament, who voted them ten thousand pounds on the condition that all applicants under twelve months old should be received. This wholesale scheme of charity, which was largely assisted by more public grants, only lasted for four years. On the very first general reception-day, 117 infants were taken in, and 1800 before the half-year was out; while in the ensuing year 3727 were admitted. The consequences are described to be lamentable. Immorality was greatly encouraged by the unlimited facility for thus disposing of its fruit, and the children themselves—though 'the Foundling' had then branch establishments in many country places—could not be

supported in such vast numbers. Of the 15,000 children received in those four years, no less than 10,000 perished in early infancy. Parish officers sent in the legitimate children of paupers, in order to relieve their rates; parents brought their own children, when dying, in order that the hospital should pay for their interment; and strangers were even employed by parents to convey their children from the country to this Universal Mother, at so much per head. Parliament retraced its steps in 1759, although it humanely provided for the maintenance of all whom its too lavish charity had already admitted, and the branch country hospitals were disposed of. There were at that time 6000 children in the establishment under five years of age; and it was not till 1769 that by apprenticing all who were fit to be placed out, the number was reduced below 1000. At the present time, the yearly admissions average 32, and 430 are maintained by the institution.

After the government grant was withdrawn, it was for the first time determined that children should be taken, as at present, under particular circumstances. At the above period, however, matters were much more favourable to the petitioner than now. Thus, children were received without inquiry with whom a hundred pounds were paid down; and doubtless it was among this class that the Romance of High Life is to be chiefly looked for. At other times, a governor stating that he knew the circumstances of any case, was held sufficient to warrant admission without inquiry. Of course, under such regulations, things took place which good Thomas Coram never contemplated; and indeed, even now, the Commissioner—who is not, it seems, a sentimental person—by no means looks with favour upon the Foundling Hospital. His opinions are too long to quote—even if we did not disagree with them—but he maintains, and not, of course, without some force as well as plausibility, that the institution, upon the whole, is a mistake. Where we cordially coincide with him is in his remarks against the secrecy of the system; not, indeed, because it conceals the guilt of the mother, and introduces her under false colours to the world, but because it must needs afford more or less of cover to jobbery.

Yet it is doubtless to this Secrecy that the institution of the Foundling Hospital is indebted for its romance, and therefore, in great measure, to the interest which it excites in the public. Though mothers may abandon their children to the tender mercies of a public company, they cannot do so without pain. The court-room of the Foundling has probably witnessed as painful scenes as any chamber in Great Britain; and again, when the children at five years old are brought up to London, and separated from their foster-mothers, these scenes are renewed. Even the foster-fathers are sometimes found to be greatly affected by the parting, while the grief of their wives is excessive; and the children themselves so pine after their supposed parents, that they are humoured by holidays and treats, for a day or two after their arrival, in order to mitigate the change.

Though infants received into the hospital are never again seen by their mothers (save in peculiar cases), a species of intercourse with them is still permitted. Mothers are allowed to come every Monday and ask after their children's health, but

are allowed no further information. On an average, about eight women per week avail themselves of this privilege, and there are some who come regularly every fortnight. Even when application is made by mothers for the return of their child, it is frequently refused: when he is apprenticed, no intercourse is permitted between them, unless master and mistress, as well as parent and child, approve of it; nor when he has attained maturity, unless the child as well as the mother demand it. Thus a woman, who was married from the hospital, and had borne seven children, once requested to know her parents, on the ground that 'there was money belonging to her,' and her application was refused. But in November of the same year the name of a certain Foundling was revealed upon the application of a solicitor, and his setting forth that money had been invested for its use by the dead mother; the governors granting this request upon the ground that the mother herself had disclosed the secret, which they were otherwise bound to keep inviolable. Again, in 1833, a Foundling, seventy-six years of age, was permitted, for certain good reasons, to become acquainted with his own name, though, as one may imagine, not with his parent. It is a wise child in the Foundling who even knows its own mother.

The most touching portion of this Report is the account of the stratagems resorted to by women to identify their children, and assure themselves of their wellbeing. Sometimes notes are found attached to the infant's garments, beseeching the nurse to tell the mother her name and residence, that the latter may visit her child during its stay in the country; and they have been even known to follow the van on foot which conveys their little one to its new home. They will also attend the baptism in the chapel, in the hope of hearing the name conferred upon the infant; for, if they succeed in identifying the child during its stay at nurse, they can always preserve the identification during its subsequent abode in the hospital, since the children appear in chapel twice on Sunday, and dine in public on that day, which gives opportunities of seeing them from time to time, and preserving the recollection of their features. In these attempts at discovery, mistakes, however, are often committed, and attention lavished on the wrong child; instances have even occurred of mothers coming in mourning attire to the hospital to return thanks for the kindness bestowed upon their deceased offspring, only to be informed that they are alive and well.

It is stated that children who are discovered by the mother are spoiled by indulgence—and we can imagine that efforts to make up for the past would be lavish enough in such cases—and rarely turn out well.

One exception to the rule of non-intercourse is related, where a medical attendant certified that the sanity of one unhappy woman might be affected unless she was allowed to see her child.

Perhaps the saddest piece of information which the Commissioner gives us is this: 'Twice or thrice in the year the boys are permitted to take an excursion to Primrose Hill; but at other times (except when sent on errands), and the girls at all times, are kept within the hospital walls.' This confinement so affects their growth, that few of either sex attain to the average height of men and women.

THE TIME FOR ME.

WHAT time the Shepherd Summer leads
His flock of daisies o'er the meads;
What time the gorse and broom unfold
Their beauty and their wealth of gold;
What time the hawthorn's linen blossom
With crimson spots piled o'er its bosom,
In clusters pendent from the tree,
Kisses the wind most fragrantly;
What time the grass is spotted over
With triple leaves and crowns of clover,
With butter-cups and dandelions,
Gold and emerald in affiance;
What time the woolly-coated peach
Hangs purple where the sunbeams reach;
What time the cherry's crimson cheek
Attracts the black-bird's gashing beak;
What time the rose-buds burst afire,
To flame abroad in red attire—
O that's the pious time for me,
In the maiden morning's company,
The air to drink and landscape see,
And trace all good, O God, to Thee!

What time on Hownam-law the Sun
Proclaims his noon-day goal is won;
What time the liquid shade doth fall
On yonder Eastern-facing wall;
What time upon the church's roof
Dove from dove is perched aloof;
What time, the Arabs of the bill,
The chatt'ring sparrows even are still—
O then, that is the time for me
To enter meditatively
The pleached honeysuckle bower,
And softly charm the thirsty hour,
In drinking from the haunted springs,
The gifts of God's poetic kings!

What time the kindler of the day
Wheels down his occidental way,
'Mid purple clouds, loopholed with white,
Whence issues the imprisoned light
That rushes o'er the East in millions
Of burning rays of Western brilliance;
Which gild the towers with golden faces,
And shadows fling on lower places
Of each obstructing tree and wall
Before the painting beams that fall,
Which far away, with silver tide,
Flow on the blue of Cheviot's side,
And bring the greenery into bloom
A moment 'mid the parted gloom—
O then, that is the time for me
To bow my head most reverently,
And, 'midst the twilight's placid calm,
To sing to God my evening psalm!

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